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ABSTRACT

As part of a statewide study of postsecondary remedial programs and services in California, site visits were conducted at seven community colleges, four state universities, and three campuses of the University of California (UC). Interviews with at least five administrators and faculty members at each campus solicited opinions and perceptions regarding: (1) terms used to refer to remedial courses (e.g., developmental, foundational, or skills building); (2) courses that were considered remedial; (3) service to functionally illiterate or semi-literate students; (4) the use and desirability of comprehensive entry-level testing programs in reading, writing, and mathematics for all students; (5) the use of test results for counseling or placement; (6) remediation as a minority student problem or one that cuts across all student populations; (7) views and staffing of remedial programs and support services; (8) credit for remedial courses; (9) program costs; (10) evaluation of program effectiveness; and (11) the history, effects, and future of remediation on campus. The study report summarizes and contrasts the responses of personnel at the community colleges, state universities, and UC campuses. (HB)

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April 1983

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REMEDIAL EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: CAMPUS PERSPECTIVES ON A SERIOUS PROBLEM

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INTRODUCTION

In early 1981, the California Postsecondary Education Commission embarked on a major study of the nature, extent and cost of remedial education in California's three public postsecondary segments (i.e., The University of California, the California State University system, and the California Community Colleges). The impetus for the study was the growing concern over the number of students who enter postsecondary education without the necessary preparation to do college-level work and require remedial courses in reading, writing, language skills, or mathematics before they can succeed in college-level courses. The study was also on outgrowth of work the Commission had done in the area of student writing skills, which culminated in a statewide standard for entrance into the freshman composition course in all three segments and in funding for the California Writing Project. Examining the widespread decline in student writing skills--and the measures being taken to reverse the trend--prompted questions as to whether similar problems existed in other basic academic skills.

The audience for the study was primarily the California Legislature, which had become embroiled in discussions about the necessity and costs of providing remedial education at the college and university level. To make informed decisions as to the appropriateness of providing and funding particular remedial programs or courses in specific segments, both the Legislature and the segments needed accurate information regarding the types of remedial programs, courses and activities being offered, the increases in the extent of remediation being done in each of the three segments, and the costs associated with providing remediation at the postsecondary level.

The project was designed to include two phases: first, an exploratory, descriptive study of the programs and their costs; and second, an analysis of policy issues. The policy issues identified at the outset of the project included the following:

* The continuing increase in remediation at all levels of public postsecondary education--should all segments be so involved, and, if not, what are the the alternatives?

* The question of costs--what are the projections of costs if we continue with the status quo (providing remediation in all three levels)?

* Could one segment, such as the Community Colleges, do most of the remediation on a cooperative basis, for the University and State University?

* Are there other alternatives to every segment doing increasing amounts of remediation?

* Could the senior segments develop a plan to "phase-down" the extent of remediation being done, perhaps over a five-year period, with the result of returning the bulk of remediation to K-12 and the Community Colleges?

* Remediation and affirmative action--is there a relationship and, if so, what is it?

* Would altering the status quo situations in which each segment does fairly extensive remediation have an impact on segmental affirmative action?

* Admissions standards, K-12, and postsecondary education--what effect might changes in collegiate admission standards have on the extent and cost of remediation in public postsecondary education?

Other policy questions regarding segmental missions and roles, credit and funding of remedial courses, English as a Second Language programs, diagnostic testing and assessment, and evaluation of remedial programs all arose as a result of the study's findings.

The methodology of the study involved a survey of all public colleges and universities in California. The survey instrument included questions on the types of remedial programs, courses and support services available on each campus; whether diagnostic testing and assessment services were provided; the number of courses, sections and enrollments in remedial reading, writing, mathematics and ESL on each campus from 1978-79 to 1980-81; where remedial courses were taught and by what types of instructors; whether the remedial courses carried credit toward the degree; the costs associated with both remedial courses and support services over the three-year period; and finally, whether the institutions evaluated their remediation activities. In addition to the survey, Commission staff conducted site visits at 14 campuses throughout California, speaking to administrative staff, faculty, and when possible, students involved in remedial education. The site visits included seven Community Colleges, four State University campuses, and three campuses of the University of California. The sites were selected according to four variables: (1) geographic location in the State; (2) whether the campus was urban, suburban or rural; (3) the size of the student body; and (4) the percentage of minority student enrollment. The same interview schedule was used on every campus and over one hundred faculty, administrators and staff were questioned about their involvement in and perceptions of remedial education.

The final report of the study, entitled Promises to Keep: Remedial Education in California's Public Colleges and Universities, was published by the Commision in January, 1983, and is available upon request. It includes a discussion of the dimensions of the remediation problem, the difficulties with definitions, the survey data on the nature, extent and costs of remediation in the three segments, and a discussion of the policy implications for remedial education in California. What has not been published are the results of the campus interviews and that is the focus of this paper.

THE SITE VISIT/CASE STUDY APPROACH

Realizing that survey data can provide only a statistical view of reality, we wanted to talk to people involved with remedial education at the campus level to get their ideas and perceptions about what many at the State level perceived to be a problem. How did campus personnel view remediation? Did they feel it was appropriate to the mission of their institution? What courses did they define as remedial compared to the definitions we had adopted for our survey? Did they feel remediation was primarily a minority student problem? Had they been forced to "water down" the regular college curriculum to cope with underprepared students? Did they feel that the remediation problem was worse now than ten years ago? Did they see offering remedial courses as a temporary phenomenon or as a permanent fixture in their institution?

These and other questions, which could best be answered by those on the campus--or on the "front lines" as one faculty member put it—were what prompted us to include a series of site visits designed to provide interview information from a variety of people on each campus. When viewed together, the results of the individual interviews provided a case study for each campus, and when the campus information was compared to that from other campuses within that segment, a picture of the views of remediation from the campus level was obtained for each segment. The site visits allowed us the opportunity to validate survey responses, to evaluate the nature and extent of the problem at the campus level, and to discuss the various approaches being taken to respond to the underprepared student. In short, the case study approach provided us with a better understanding of the problem and contributed to the accuracy of the study's findings and conclusions.

We decided to interview at least five people on each campus: the principal respondent to our survey; the chairs of the mathematics and English departments; the head of the ESL program; and the director of the learning assistance or tutorial center. We wanted to talk to students as time permitted, but given the fiscal constraints that forced us to schedule interviews at two campuses per day, contacting students proved difficult. However, the Commission's Student Advisory Committee reviewed the study at various points and shared their perceptions about remediation at several meetings with project staff.

The fourteen sites visited were:

California Community Colleges:

- Cabrillo College
- City of San Francisco
- Foothill College
- Los Angeles City College
- Los Angeles Southwest College
- Modesto Junior College
- Santa Monica College

California State University:

- CSU Fresno
- CSU Long Beach
- CSU Los Angeles
- CSU San Jose

University of California:

- UC Berkeley
- UC Los Angeles
- UC Santa Cruz

The staff members interviewed on these campuses shared ideas and opinions openly and their views on the issues surrounding remediation provide an important context within which to view the problem.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

In order to obtain reasonably comparable data from institutions throughout the State, we developed a definition of the term "remediation" for our study. In addition, we defined what were to be considered as remedial courses when answering the survey

questionnaire. Remediation was defined as "courses and support services needed to overcome student deficiencies in reading, writing, and mathematics to a level at which students have a reasonable chance of succeeding in regular college courses, including vocational, technical, and professional courses." Those courses to be considered remedial were defined as follows:

* Remedial Courses in Reading: Courses which provide aid to students reading below twelfth-grade level, excluding courses in speed reading.

* Remedial Courses in Writing: Courses below the transfer-level freshman composition course (often known as English 1A).

* Remedial Courses in Mathematics: Courses in arithmetic, elementary algebra, plane geometry, and intermediate algebra, or courses whose content consists primarily of these subjects.

Also included were definitions of English as a Second Language courses, and remedial support services such as tutoring in basic skills, special advising, and various types of learning assistance. The definitions of remedial courses were chosen because they paralleled those then being used by the academic senates of the three segments in drafting their joint statement of expectations.

The first questions we asked during each site visit interview were "How do you feel about the term 'remedial?' Do you prefer any other term? What term do you use on your campus?" and "Which of the courses we define as remedial in our campus survey do you consider remedial?" We quickly learned that many people in each segment defined both the term and the problem quite differently.

Almost no one in any segment used the term "remedial." At the University, courses were called "preparatory," "developmental," or "skills building." State University faculty used "pre-baccalaureate" as well as "developmental." At the Community Colleges a wide range of euphenisms was used including, in addition to those above, "personal development," "foundational," and "basic skills." In addition, staff in every segment cautioned us against considering ESL courses as remedial, although some institutions did distinguish between the lowest levels of ESL courses (which were often offered on a non-credit basis), and the "college-level" ESL courses. Many faculty felt that the term remedial was too emotionally charged, while one univeristy faculty member said that we should not "worry about words but worry about the issues."

A second area of disagreement concerned which courses in the three basic subject areas (reading, writing, and mathematics) were considered as remedial. At the three University campuses, students who were not ready to enter the freshman composition course had a variety of options beyond the standard "Subject A" writing course, including writing intensive sections of courses and special programs such as the Freshman Preparatory Program or the Freshman Summer Program. However, most faculty agreed that courses below Freshman Composition could be considered "remedial." The State University English faculty generally agreed with the University faculty, and cited such options as reading and writing labs for students who were not ready for the freshman composition course. The Community Colleges had the greatest array of courses in reading and writing below the transfer-level freshman composition course, including courses at several colleges for those who need help in reading and writing at the first through sixth grade level. Many of the most basic reading and writing courses in the Community Colleges were offered through learning assistance centers or developmental education programs staffed by learning disability specialists.

While there was general agreement that courses below the freshman composition level were remedial, and since the "Statewide Standard for Entrance to Freshman Composition" had resulted in some consensus across the segments as to what students should have mastered before entering that course, there was great disagreement among mathematics faculty even within the same segment as to which math courses were remedial. Although math faculty at one University campus stated that any course below calculus was remedial, faculty at the two other University campuses indicated that their departments offered both intermediate and elementary algebra for college credit, and that since students can enter the University having taken only elementary algebra and geometry, it was likely that intermediate algebra was not truly remedial for many UC students. One University faculty member observed, regarding the two pre-calculus courses offered by his institution, that "In 1966, such courses were not needed--we could just accept the best students." State University faculty disagreed as to whether intermediate algebra should be considered remedial, although the faculty on the four campuses we visited all agreed that courses below intermediate algebra (such as elementary algebra and arithmetic) were all remedial. The Community College mathematics faculty we interviewed were the most hostile to our definition of intermediate algebra (and courses below that level) as remedial. Almost no Community College mathematics faculty felt intermediate algebra should be considered remedial. All seven Community College campuses offered basic arithmetic courses and some faculty felt that only that course should be considered remedial. Several of these campuses also offered a full calculus sequence, attesting to the wide variation in academic preparation of students who enter the Community Colleges.

Clearly, the term remedial means different things to different people, and faculty--even within the same segment or campus--do not necessarily agree on which courses should be considered remedial.

THE QUESTION OF AN ACADEMIC FLOOR

Two of our questions related to serving those students with the very lowest level of skills--those at the elementary school level. We asked "Does your campus serve the functionally illiterate or semi-literate, i.e., those with skills below the fourth or sixth grade level?", and "Have you ever considered establishing an academic floor below which you would not teach?" We thought these questions would apply primarily to the "open-door" Community Colleges, but faculty from the two senior segments provided some very interesting responses.

A University staff member working in a learning assistance center responded to the functionally illiterates question that his campus served "probably a handful of such students, mostly among athletes and minorities." He stated that his program worked with those needing developmental reading skills at about the ninth grade level, "or occasionally even less." State University faculty and administrators differed in their responses. One administrator indicated that his campus did serve some students with very low levels of skills, while a member of that campus' mathematics faculty responded that if students need arithmetic "let them go to a community college." One English faculty member at that campus reported that some foreign students have so much trouble with the English language that they cannot pass the junior level writing proficiency requirement, and thus may not graduate regardless of their grade point averages. Both these responses were repeated on several other State University campuses, with mathematics faculty generally taking a harder line about sending such students to a community college than did English department faculty. Several administrators stated that if students are entering the State University needing assistance in such basic skills, "we just have to help them."

Community College faculty and administrators readily admitted that some of their students were either illiterate or semi-literate, but campuses differed in what they did for such students. Several campuses referred such student to their learning disability programs; others referred these students to the Adult Basic Education programs offered by the local K-12 district. In some cases, the Community College campus offered all Adult Basic Education for the local area, and "goes right to the bottom" as one faculty member put it. One Community College campus, widely regarded as a "good transfer institution," does not generally serve any students who score below the eighth grade level on their reading test; such students are referred to the local high school district's adult education program. An administrator on this campus observed that "you just can't offer a college education to people below a certain level."

While this campus clearly had established an academic floor below which faculty would not teach, faculty and administrators in other community colleges often disagreed with this notion. Administrators on several campuses stated that there might be legal consequences if they refused to serve anyone over the age of 18 regardless of skill level, and cited the open-door policy of the Community Colleges as requiring such service. While several campuses reported having no academic floor, one faculty member in a learning assistance center said that her campus was giving serious thought to the problem, since "there needs to be some sense of priorities given limited funds."

TESTING AND ASSESSMENT

Discussions about the establishment of an academic floor often led us to our questions on testing and assessment. We asked faculty and staff in each segment "Has your campus considered instituting a comprehensive entry-level testing program for all students (both full-time and part-time) in reading, writing and mathematics? What do you think of this idea? Should testing and assessment be used for counseling or for placement of students?" We knew that several placement tests existed for writing skills, most notably the English Placement Test used on all State University campuses, and the Subject A exam used on most University campuses. But what did faculty think of a placement or assessment test that would cover mathematics as well as reading and writing skills?

At the University campuses we visited, English faculty were generally pleased with the "Subject A" essay exam and felt that it helped students be placed in courses appropriate to their level of skills. However, none of these campuses required a general mathematics skills test, although several used a departmental placement test for those students wishing to enter calculus. While a faculty member on one campus admitted that there was little interest in campus-wide testing for mathematics skills, he felt that the UC/CSU math placement exam should be used for all entering students. Student self-referral to mathematics courses--and then the departmental placement test--seemed to be the general rule at the University campuses. Student self-referral was also used at the State University campuses we visited, sometimes supplemented by a departmental placement test. Most of the faculty were well aware of the proposed "Entry Level Mathematics" test which would be given to all entering students on all State University campuses, similar to the English Placement Test. One administrator questioned whether the necessary funding would be forthcoming to establish the system-wide mathematics exam, while a faculty member stated that "we have not decided what, if anything, we will do for the students identified as needing help by the test. Remediation may have to come from the Community Colleges-- in fact, we have some concurrent enrollment right now." The question of finding the funds to provide the requisite remediation once a mathematics placement test has identified students who need such help was viewed as a major problem by the mathematics faculty

on several State University campuses. It is also a serious problem for the Community Colleges since the current cap on growth and funding for that segment means that additional students probably can not be accommodated.

The Community Colleges varied from using nothing but student self-referral for placement, to a campus that was considering implementing a full system of testing and assessment similar to that used in the Miami-Dade district in Florida. A variety of tests were used for placement in the Community Colleges, many designed by departmental faculty. Departmental exams and in-course assessment tests were generally preferred over campus-wide placement exams. Again, many faculty cited the widely varied academic backgrounds of their students, and the fact that a placement test might discourage some of their students from entering in the first place. This idea was supported, albeit from the other point of view, by the Community College campus that has an eighth grade academic floor and placement testing for any student who wishes to take eight units or more. One administrator on that campus indicated that they don't have many students with low-level skills since "we have the test, and students knowing we have it helps."

REMEDIATION AND MINORITY STUDENTS

Realizing that the question could get us into politically sensitive areas, but feeling that it needed to be answered, we asked each person "Would you characterize remediation as a minority student problem or does it cut across all student populations?" The answer we got was virtually unanimous across all segments and departments: the need for remedial help cuts across all ethnic groups and affects students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Many faculty members felt that the quality of high school education had declined over the past ten years, affecting not only minority students from low-wealth, often academically weak high schools, but also "those from white, middle-class high schools who haven't written a word in six years." Other faculty members and administrators reported that foreign students and refugees had the most severe problems, particularly with language skills. Some faculty cited the fact that more women and minorities were attempting to enter technical or mathematics-related disciplines, with the result that weaknesses in their high school training in math-related subjects were showing up with increasing frequency. One University campus reported that while its Freshman Summer Program had begun as a program for minority students who needed remedial help, it was now a "mainstream" program that serves students from all ethnic backgrounds. Rather than just affecting particular academic skills, a faculty member at one community college said that the remediation problem was one of an "inability of students to think, to grasp concepts, not just to write."

STAFFING REMEDIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Several questions we asked related to how the campuses viewed and staffed remedial programs and support services. Was remediation on the campus an "add-on" function, or was it integrated with other parts of the curriculum? Did the faculty who teach remedial courses have special training to work with remedial students? Did the remedial course faculty also teach regular, non-remedial courses? And how did both types of faculty (those who taught remedial courses and those who did not) feel about the campus having to offer remediation?

The University seemed to have the greatest distinction between those faculty who did and did not offer remediation, and the most negative faculty attitudes about having to offer remedial courses. Generally, we were told that teaching assistants, lecturers, or teaching associates were assigned the remedial courses at the

University. Sometimes these people remained on the campus for many years and were recognized for their expertise in teaching, although they were not considered "ladder-rank" faculty and were not eligible for tenure. One large University campus reported that its mathematics faculty were not "overwhelmingly supportive of doing any remediation in the math department" and were delighted to have th local community college come onto the University campus to handle the remedial math courses. Some regular mathematics faculty on one University campus shared in the teaching of the pre-calculus course, but the "math lab" was staffed by non-regular faculty personnel. One instructor in a University writing program stated that although many students needed to take the basic writing courses, "the literature faculty won't touch this program." This instructor further stated that the writing program was "constantly under seige since it had no full-time, ladder-rank people," and that the University "should decide whether this program is part of the University concept or not."

The State University campuses visited varied in their approaches to providing remediation, and often varied from department to department. On one campus, all full-time faculty taught the remedial math courses, although two faculty really specialized in that area. On that same campus, the English department primarily used teaching assistants to teach remedial courses, and one instructor characterized the attitude of regular English department faculty as "snobbish." However, the chair of that campus' English department also headed the remedial writing program, helping to give it "more respectability" as one faculty member phrased it. In general, the State University mathematics faculty were less supportive of offering remedial courses than were the English faculty. This may be the result of the establishment of the system-wide English Placement Test that has made the teaching of writing a focus in the English departments. One administrator at a large State University campus indicated that because the campus president was supportive of providing remediation to enable students to handle college-level courses, the faculty were becoming more supportive. This campus was providing retraining and orientation for faculty in working with remedial students and one administrator stated that she felt their program was "the most exciting experiment in the State, which could provide a model for other campuses to follow." This view of remediation as an institutional commitment is an important one and seemed to characterize some of the best programs.

The Community College campuses also varied in their approach to staffing remedial courses and services. On some campuses, full-time, tenured faculty members rotated in teaching the more basic courses; on other campuses, part-time faculty were the primary teachers of remedial courses. In general though, full-time faculty in both English and mathematics departments shared with part-time faculty in the teaching of remedial courses and in staffing the tutorial centers and learning labs, perhaps because there is such high demand for these offerings.

REMEDIAL COURSES AND CREDIT

Two of our questions related to credit for remedial courses: "Should any or all remedial courses be approved for credit?" and "Should students be allowed to repeat remedial courses on an unlimited basis?" Interestingly, faculty perceptions about whether or not graduation credit or workload credit was granted, or whether students could repeat courses for credit, often varied from segmental or campus policies.

The University campuses we visited differed in their answers to the credit questions. One campus indicated that students generally took an incomplete in the basic English course rather than failing, and could then repeat it up to three times. If a student failed the third time, he or she would be encouraged to take a similar course at a community college. On that campus, students could receive a variable number of units in the remedial math courses, progressing at their own rate. The three University

campuses gave at least partial credit for their remedial math and English courses, although this appeared to be under considerable debate.

On the State University campuses, students could generally repeat a remedial course as often as desired, but get the credit only once. Several faculty and administrators mentioned the recent Executive Order prohibiting baccalaureate credit but permitting workload credit for remedial courses at the State University and felt that that approach was the best one both fiscally and educationally.

In general, remedial courses on the seven Community College campuses we visited were offered for credit, largely for associate degree credit but sometimes for transfer or baccalaureate degree credit. One campus reported variable pace/credit courses with students proceeding at their own speed and credit granted according to the proficiency level reached. Policies on repeating courses varied, with some allowing numerous repeats but credit only once, one allowing repeating anytime to improve a grade (but not to add the credits), and one campus reporting that any student who repeats a course three times and fails it each time must leave the college on academic probation.

COSTS OF REMEDIAL COURSES

Given that the statewide survey results had generated numerical data on enrollments and costs of remediation in the three segments, costs that amounted to some $82 million statewide for remedial courses and support services, we wanted to ascertain the faculty and administrative perceptions about remedial program costs, and whether they viewed remedial courses as "more expensive, less expensive, or just as expensive to offer as regular courses."

In general, the University campus staff we interviewed felt that the remedial courses, when staffed by teaching assistants and lecturers, cost less than regular courses. State University staff varied widely in their perceptions: several campuses felt that their courses cost less, due to using tutors, part-time faculty, and teaching assistants. Another campus with a similar program responded that its remedial English courses were more expensive, since they had half the enrollment size of a regular course. The Community College staff we talked to also differed in their responses with several citing higher costs due to lower class size, more tutors, and more individual assistance, while others felt remedial courses were lower cost due to the large numer of students taking such courses and the use of part-time teachers. Several staff members indicated that the continuing shortage of funds in their segment could threaten their ability to offer the necessary remedial courses.

EVALUATING REMEDIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Given the amount of money and staff time devoted to remedial programs and support services, we wanted to know what the results were. Were we getting our collective money's worth? Were students who had taken remedial programs going on to succeed in regular college courses? To elicit discussion of this question we asked "How do you know remediation is working on your cammpus?"

In general, there were few formal evaluations of remedial programs. One State University campus faculty member cited a Chancellor's Office study of the English Placement Test that indicated that those students who took the EPT and were properly placed did better than those students who attempted English courses without the appropriate placement. This campus also intended to keep evaluation information resulting from the junior level writing proficiency exam. One Community College campus conducted pre and post testing in all its English classes, while another

examined "survival rates" of students who took pre-algebra courses in the elementary and intermediate algebra courses. More campuses appeared to evaluate special student populations—such as those in "summer bridge" programs, EOP programs, or those in special developmental or learning disability programs--than their regular remedial courses. Evaluation was more likely to be informal and anecdotal than to be based on any specific research or evaluation data. When asked about this situation, several faculty members pointed out that limited funds were better spent on assisting the students with the necessary courses or services than on conducting research studies. Still, it seems that many faculty and administrators we interviewed were in the position of offering remedial courses and programs they thought—but could not prove—were working.

REMEDIATION, PAST AND FUTURE

Finally, we asked a series of questions designed to allow the faculty and administrators we interviewed to consider the history of remediation on their campuses, its effects on the curriculum, and what remediation meant for the future of their institutions. We asked: "Do you think underpreparedness is worse now than it was ten years ago? On what do you base your opinion?" "With the increasing numbers of underprepared students, has your regular curriculum been watered down or otherwise changed?" "Do you see having to offer remedial courses and services as a temporary or permanent phenomenon?" The answers were enlightening.

Faculty in all three segments generally agreed that students are less well prepared now than ten or twenty years ago. Some cited a serious decline in abstract reasoning skills, along with declines in students' abilities to concentrate and to study effectively. Several staff indicated that more students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds were entering higher education, resulting in the need for more remediation. While some saw more students "at the lowest levels," they also reported that their best students did as well or better than students of ten or twenty years ago. In addition, some faculty cited the renewed practice of testing and assessment as the reason for the "discovery" of students' weaknesses in various areas. One administrator openly stated that students coming to his State University campus were "not getting a college education compared to ten years ago. The faculty here know this and are very frustrated."

Many faculty and administrators across all three segments told us that their curricula had been altered or "watered down" in response to the decline in students' skills. Some campus faculty reported that while their upper division courses were "just as tough as before," their lower division courses covered less material, and their lowest level remedial courses had large enrollments. Several administrators noted that the necessity of having to offer remedial courses was taking resources away from the more advanced and upper division courses, negatively affecting faculty morale.

As to whether remediation was a permanent or temporary phenomenon, most faculty and administrators echoed the learning assistance center director who said she was sounding "the usual note of despair. I haven't heard anyone who thinks it's short term." Another learning assistance center staff member stated that while "it may be permanent, hopefully the high schools will begin to realize the importance of real competencies and how many fields are closed to students without the appropriate skills." Refuting this view, an administrator at one State University campus said the "high schools will never change, even with the proficiency standards." Members of the math faculty on two State University campuses indicated that their campuses were trying to "maintain a balance between the demand for remediation and offering courses for which we were trained. If it comes to a choice, we'll do courses for the

majors--there are other places for students to get remedial help, like the Community Colleges."

Community College faculty and administrators generally viewed remediation as part of their mission. One campus with a large minority and low-income student population reported that they could "remediate a student from the lowest level to the twelfth grade level in one year, if the student is willing to undertake the full-time and intensive work necessary." Another Community College faculty member reported that their computerized PLATO system in their learning center was "highly interactive and infinitely patient" and had proved quite successful in improving students' skills. Clearly, the faculty on the Community College campuses we visited were more comfortable with having to do remediation--even on a permanent basis--and more positive about the results than were faculty in the two four-year segments.

IN CLOSING

As indicated in the beginning of this paper, the perceptions and attitudes of faculty and administrators provide an important context within which to view the problem of remediation. What we saw on the campuses both depressed and encouraged us. While some faculty decry the need for remediation and feel it is inappropriate for them or for their institution to provide, others at all three levels of postsecondary education have responded to the problem with commitment and creativity. Although the problem is serious, there are hopeful signs. More students from more different types of backgrounds are entering postsecondary education than ever before. Some are appalled at this fact; others applaud it. While some of these students will fall by the wayside, others will find faculty, staff, and administrators ready to help them succeed. Remediation is a problem, but it is also a challenge, a challenge that may be met in different ways by different campuses. Meeting that challenge may well be the most important goal that higher education has set for itself in this century.

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